

Minnesota Veterans' Home Complex, Laundry (Bldg. No. 13)  
5101 Minnehaha Avenue South  
Minneapolis  
Hennepin County  
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-74-I

HABS  
MINN,  
27-MINAP,  
19-I-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
MINNESOTA VETERANS' HOME COMPLEX,  
LAUNDRY (BUILDING NO. 13)

74-I  
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Location: 5101 Minnehaha Avenue South, Minneapolis,  
Hennepin County, Minnesota  
  
USGS St. Paul West Quadrangle, Universal  
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone 15;  
483960:4973380; 484140:4972680; 483640:4973140

Present Owner: State of Minnesota  
Department of Veterans' Affairs  
St. Paul, Minnesota

Present Occupant: Minnesota Veterans' Home

Present Use: Storage

Significance: Building No. 13, built in 1911 stands next to the site of the first laundry, built in 1890. It is part of a complex which once was nearly self-sustaining, containing a bakery, tailor, shoe repair, barber shop and a heating and lighting plant. The current heating plant was built in 1937. Building No. 13, known in 1911 as the laundry, stands in original condition.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of Erection: 1911 (Source: Minnesota Soldiers' Home Annual Report 1910, 1911).
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: State of Minnesota
4. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers: Unknown
5. Original Plans and Construction: Not Available
6. Alterations and Additions: None

B. Historical Context:

In October, 1847, when Mr. Franklin Steele, a major landowner of the East Bank of the Mississippi river, decided to build a dam across the Mississippi River at St. Anthony, he hired Ard Godfrey, a recent immigrant from Maine, to superintend the work. This was the first dam built across the falls at St. Anthony and was the beginning of a long career in the milling industry for Mr. Godfrey.

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Although the West Bank of the river was occupied only by the military at Fort Snelling, Ard Godfrey had one of the soldiers put a parcel of the land there in his name. This land was subsequently bought by Mr. Godfrey. It forms a point bounded by the confluence of the Mississippi River and Brown's Creek (as Minnehaha was then called). The natural falls on the creek were dammed by Mr. Godfrey and a mill was erected for grinding grain in 1853. He also built his home north of the creek in 1853.

The City of Minneapolis bought the land for \$1,000.00 an acre from Mr. Godfrey in 1870, which was planned to become part of the new Minneapolis Park System.

In 1886 a plea was made to Governor McGill to consider legislation to appropriate funds and land for a soldiers' home. It had been 20 years since the Civil War, and many aging veterans were living in county poor houses. It is believed that 30,000 soldiers of the "Great Rebellion" lived in Minnesota in 1886. Godfrey's Point, as the land had come to be known, was offered by the City of Minneapolis for the home. It was accepted by the Soldiers' Home Committee on July 12, 1887, and an appropriation for the erection of buildings became available in the summer of 1888. In the meantime, soldiers were housed in nearby structures from November 21, 1887 until a headquarters, hospital, dining hall, heating and laundry plant and cottages could be built. Warren Barnes Dunnell was selected architect for the project from a competition held, and H. Cleveland was selected as landscape architect.

Original legislation had appropriated \$100,000.00 for building at the Soldiers' Home. A cottage plan was adopted because it made expansion easier. Professor Cleveland laid out a series of roads, the main one forming a great loop, around which the cottages would be built. In 1888 two cottages and one section of the heating plant were built. In 1890 the central portion and one wing of the hospital was completed, along with the addition to the heating plant, used for a laundry. Electricity was available to the cottages in this year as well.

In 1891 \$105,000.00 was made available to the Soldiers' Home and another cottage and a domestic building were added. Each building conformed to a strict architectural style: The basement stories and lintels and pediments are of Lake Superior sandstone, the bricks are St. Louis pressed. The interior woodwork is oak and the floors are maple. All windows are of single pane double hung. The heating plant and laundry was added on to several times as the Home grew in capacity. This structure was two stories, the second being under a gable roof.

According to available insurance maps and annual reports of the Minnesota Soldiers' Home, the laundry facilities were separated in 1911, and a new building was built for them next door to the original site. The laundry today stands in original condition, although it is only used for storage at the present. It is a two story building of St. Louis brick with a shallow sloping hip roof. The second story was used for sleeping quarters. The original building was destroyed to build a new heating plant in 1937.

The Minnesota Veterans' Home Complex is not as populated as it was at the turn of the century. Many modern buildings have been added to the grounds, changing the intended character of the "cottage cluster" idea and similar materials. Cleveland's landscape layout continues to lead one on a charming loop around the site, at one point to the edge of the Mississippi Bluffs, overlooking the still beautiful sight of the flowing river. Ard Godfrey's mill ruins remain along the banks of the Minnehaha Creek, all serving to recall a grand past at Godfrey's Point.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The Laundry Building No. 13 is a two story building of St. Louis pressed brick. It stands in original condition. The front of the building faces the back of Building No. 1, looking into the center of the main grounds area. It is a bearing wall building with a basement of Mississippi limestone walls. Materials and character are similar to the intended architectural character of the entire site.
2. Condition of the Fabric: The Laundry Building No. 13 appears to be in good condition, with the exception of brick efflorescence at the base of the building, there gutters drain inadequately and the back wood porch is sagging and beginning to rot.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The Laundry is located on the western edge of the site, and is part of a cluster of service buildings considered to be at the "back" of the site: The heating plant, the carpenter's shop (storage) and the carpenter shop building. The dimensions of the building are 22' x 22', with a 16' first floor ceiling height and a 12' second floor ceiling height. Inner walls are non-load bearing.

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2. Foundation: Limestone walls sublevel support the building. Brick coursing runs flush with the grade on the exterior. The foundation is exposed only on the southeast side, where there are exterior steps to the basement.
3. Walls:
  - a. Northeast Elevation: (Front) The northeast facade has two stories with a projecting eave at the roof edge. It is a load bearing wall of St. Louis brick on the exterior and Kasota brick on the interior. The mortar is narrow and tinted the same color as the brick. The coursing is common bond. There are five evenly spaced double hung windows across the second story. Each is single pane with a screen. There is an iron fire escape balcony projecting from the base of the center window and a vertical ladder attached to a wall to the right of this, descending to the right of the front door. There are four double hung single pane windows on the first floor, two on each side of the central double doors. The doors each have a single pane of glass, and there is an entry-width transom above them. There are two concrete steps up to the front doors, with vestibule clearance. Each window has a six inch sandstone sill projecting slightly from the face of the building and an iron angle lintel above.
  - b. Northwest Elevation: This side faces the heating plant. It has five windows in each of two stories evenly spaced. They are identical in character to the front facade windows. The brick coursing runs down to grade, showing no foundation. A gutter between the fourth and fifth windows from the roof to the ground.
  - c. Southwest Elevation: (Back) The southwest facade has a wood porch at the second story running for half its width. Wooden stairs run down from it to the left edge. The porch and stairs have a shingled roof. There are two windows, identical in character to the rest of the building, at the second story, one on each end of the side. There is a door in the center leading out to the porch. The ground floor has one window on the left side directly below the upper one, and a door beneath the upper window on the right. There is a concrete landing from this first story door with two steps down to the ground. The porch is supported with wooded struts angled into the wall.

- d. Southeast Elevation: This side, like the one opposite, has five windows up and down, evenly spaced. There is also a set of concrete steps running below grade to the basement. There is a wooded door into the basement rooms. An iron railing surrounds this stairwell. There is also an iron grate at grade covering a basement window.
- 4. Structural System, Framing: The entire building is of double brick bearing wall. The interior brick is Kasota type and the exterior brick is St. Louis pressed. The interior walls are non-load bearing. The first floor is 2/3 wood and 1/3 concrete, the concrete running as a slab from front to back along the northwest wall. The second story floor is wood.
- 5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and Doors: The northeast facade has a double wooded door, each with a single pane, and a transom above. All other doors are of wood with a single pane.
  - b. Windows: All windows are of wood frame, double hung, with single panes of glass. Each window has a screen which can be swung out from the bottom.
  - c. Roof: The hip roof is covered with asphalt shingles and is topped with metal cap flashing. A cap ventilation stack projects from the northwestern slope to the height of the peak.
- C. Description of Interior:
  - 1. Floor Plans: The plan of the first and second floors is square. A wall of concrete separates the back left quadrant from the rest of the first floor.
  - 2. Stairways: A wooden stair runs inside up the front wall of the building to the right of the front door. This is the only interior stair. The exterior porch stair and basement stair have already been described.
  - 3. Flooring: The flooring has already been described.
  - 4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The walls are of exposed brick. The ceilings of the first and second floor are of wood. The interior woodwork has been painted white.
  - 5. Doors: All interior doors are of wood.

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6. Mechanical Equipment: The building is heated by the adjacent power plant (steam heat).
7. Equipment: All laundry equipment has been removed.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: The Laundry Building No. 13 was intended to be a visual and physical part of the collection of cottages and buildings on the site. Although it is considered a utility building, its architectural character was incorporated into the general scheme. There is access to the building along one of the planned roads on the park-like site. It was once part of a cluster of buildings which included Buildings No. 1, 3, 4, 5, the Paint Shop, the garages, the Carpenter Shop, Power House, and Dining Hall. Buildings No. 3, and 5 have been demolished, and the grounds are no longer maintained between the Laundry and the garages and Paint Shop. In 1921 a Carpenter's Shop was built immediately behind the Laundry. The main approach is along the road which runs between Building No. 1 and the Dining Hall.
2. Other Buildings on the Site:
  - a. Building No. 1, Hobby Shop (Domiciliary)
  - b. Building No. 2, Pool Room (Domiciliary)
  - c. Building No. 4, (Domiciliary)
  - d. Building No. 6, (Domiciliary)
  - e. Building No. 7, Dining Room
  - f. Building No. 9, (Domiciliary)
  - g. Building No. 10, Administration
  - h. Building No. 12, Carpenter Shop
  - i. Building No. 14, Power House
  - j. Building No. 15, Chapel/Auditorium
  - k. Building No. 16, Infirmary/Clinic
  - l. Building No. 17, Residential Care

- m. Garages
- n. Paint Shop
- o. Carpenter's Shop (Storage)

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Panoramic Views: A panoramic view of the site shows the juxtaposition of buildings after 1950. Buildings No. 3 and 5 are included on this, and the modern residence and clinic are not included. The site looks much more homogenous in character. The view was in an Annual Report of the MVH, 1944.
- B. Photographs: Several photos of the powerplant showed edges of the Laundry and the Carpenter's Shop. One photo of the powerplant prior to 1937 confirms the character of the old laundry and matches it to the Carpenter's Shop. (MHS)
- C. Maps: Sandborn maps from 1892, 1912 and 1930 showed the evolution of the site. Maps were from the Minnesota Historical Society Map Library.
- D. Building Permits, Historical Articles: Building permits were not issued for the site, as it was state owned. Histories of the State of Minnesota and the City of Minneapolis helped track ownership and use, and the Annual Reports of the Minnesota Soldiers' Home, beginning in 1888 documented building and funding activity.
- E. Bibliography:

- 1. Books:

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Bezant, Barb and Alan K. Lathrop. Drafting a House History. Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1979.

Bullock, Orin. The Restoration Manual. Norwalk, Connecticut: Silvermine Publishers, 1966.

Burnquist, Joseph A. A. Minnesota and It's People. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1924.



Christianson, Theodore. Minnesota - the land of sky-tinted waters. Volume 2: "Minnesota Becomes of Age". Chicago and New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1935.

2. Publications:

History Procedures Manual. Historic American Buildings Survey. Washington: National Parks Service, 1983.

Historic American Buildings Survey, Washburn-Crosby Milling Complex, HABS No. MN-69. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987.

"Military Science", folder containing various pamphlets, letters, brochures, studies, investigations, ads, concerning the military in Minnesota.

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3. Miscellaneous:

Minnesota Historical Society Audio-Visual Library, Photograph Collection and Insurance Map Collection.

Prepared by:  
Jane Eickelberg  
University of Minnesota  
April, 1988

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was prepared as a class project for Architecture 5143, Historical Building Research and Documentation, a class offered in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The class project was prepared under the direction of Professor Foster W. Dunwiddie in cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota. Historical data was compiled by Jane Eickelberg, University of Minnesota, April, 1988.